

CLAIMS

1. A method of manufacturing a culture medium on which plants can be grown, **characterised in that** it comprises the steps of:

- a) mixing I: a particulate base material, chosen from at least one of organic and inorganic materials, with II: a thermoplastic biologically degradable binding agent,
- b) heating at least the binding agent in order to at least partly fluidise it,
- c) cooling the mixture so as to substantially solidify the binding agent and whereby at least a part of the base material becomes bonded by means of the binding agent.

2. A method according to claim 1, **characterised in that** the amount of binding agent is maximally 25% by weight, preferably maximally 15% by weight, more preferably maximally 10% by weight, still more preferably maximally 7% by weight, even more preferably still maximally 5% by weight, and most preferably maximally 4% by weight, related to the weight of the base material.

3. A method according to any of claims 1 and 2, **characterised in that** after mixing the starting materials in step a), a shaping treatment is carried out.

4. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** the shaping treatment is performed between the steps b) and c).

5. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** the organic base material is chosen from the group consisting of peat, compost, coconut fibres, coconut granulate, hemp fibres, straw, grass, sawdust, coffee grounds, organic waste, residue from the animal feed industry and residue from the paper industry.

6. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** the inorganic base material is chosen from the group consisting of clay, soil, perlite, rock wool and other inert inorganic materials.

7. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** the particulate base material has a maximum size of 10 mm, preferably a maximum of 5 mm, more preferably a maximum of 2 mm, and still more preferably a maximum of 1 mm.

5 8. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** a preferably biologically degradable elastomer is added during step a).

10 9. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that**:

- a first layer of base material plus binding agent is positioned, upon which a second layer of base material is positioned, and finally a third layer of base material and binding agent is positioned;
- 15 - subsequently a shaping treatment is carried out such as to move the first and third layer at both sides of the second layer toward each other, such that the second layer is completely surrounded by the first layer;
- the binding agent is fluidised with the base material; and
- 20 - the binding agent is substantially solidified so as to bond the base material in the layer surrounding the second layer.

10 10. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that**:

- 25 - a first layer of base material plus binding agent is positioned, upon which a second layer of base material is applied;
- whereafter a shaping treatment is carried out by folding the first layer over the second layer, such that the second layer is completely surrounded by the first layer;
- 30 - whereafter the binding agent is fluidised with the base material; and
- the binding agent is substantially solidified so as to bond the base material in the layer surrounding the second layer.

35 11. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** step c) is performed by means of a forced supply of, for example, a gas or a liquid, or by means of unforced natural cooling.

12. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** a culture medium is shaped in the form of a culture plug, a culture mat, a culture block, or the like.

5 13. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** during the shaping treatment a compression is performed up to 99%, preferably up to 95%, more preferably up to 90%, and still more preferably up to 80% of the original volume of the mixture.

10 14. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** the melting range of the thermoplastic, biologically degradable polymer is at temperatures ranging from 20 to 130°C, preferably from 40 to 120°C, and more preferably from 60 to 100°C.

15 15. A method according to any of the preceding claims, **characterised in that** the heating in step b) is obtained by the addition of steam to the mixture.